

REPORT FROM: Head of Resources

TO: Nelson Long Term Plan Board

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Review of Resources and Communication Strategy for the Nelson Long Term Town Plan

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To provide an update on the resources available following the suspension of the Nelson Long Term Town Plan and suggested planning for a Communication Strategy.

Recommendations

That the Board:

2. Review and approve the proposed communication strategy, adapting it to the potential funding scenarios.
3. Authorise the continued administration and community engagement work that can proceed without additional funding.
4. Postpone progress on any major capital projects and on any further engagement with external consultants on detailed technical works.
5. Provide direction on the allocation of any remaining unspent budget and review contingency plans for securing new funding sources.
6. Schedule a follow-up meeting once the funding situation has been clarified, to reassess resource availability and project timelines.

Reasons

1. To update key stakeholders and the Community appropriately
2. To maintain momentum and continue with the work already carried out.
3. To spend any available budget appropriately
4. To update the Board in a timely manner.

ISSUE

1. Following the suspension of the Nelson Long Term Town Plan funding in July 2024, the Board has requested an update on current resource availability, including financial and staffing resources.
2. This report provides an update on the resources available. It addresses financial and staffing resources, outlines key messages for stakeholders and the community, and recommends a communications strategy based on varying funding scenarios.
3. It also advises the Board on administrative processes in place and identifies work that can proceed immediately and what must wait for funding confirmation.

RESOURCE UPDATE

4. Financial Resources

Nelson Long Term Plan	
	£
Capacity Funding	250,000
Spend & Commitments	
Consultants	65,975
Travel & Accommodation	654
Publicity	2,500
Staffing	15,000
Total	84,129
Remaining Funding	165,871

- **Uncommitted Capacity Support Budget**
The current financial year's budget for the Long Term Town Plan shows £165,871 in unspent funds, which remain allocated to the programme. This sum is still available and can be used to support the development of the Long Term Plan.

5. Staffing Resources

- **Internal Staff**
The post for Programme Manager for the Long Term Town Plan remains outstanding and will not be advertised until the future of the project has been confirmed.
- **External Consultants**
Contracts with Ekosgen remain on hold until confirmation is received regarding the submission date of the Investment Plan. The consultants are available but may require updated terms depending on the scope and timing of the resumed work.

6. Administrative Processes

- **Project Management Systems**

Systems to manage timelines, deliverables, and budgeting for the Long Term Plan remain active. All essential documentation and planning tools have been maintained, so there will be minimal delay when resuming work.

- **Partnership Coordination**

Communication channels with key partners and stakeholders are open, and regular updates on funding and timelines are ready to be shared when appropriate.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

7. The communications strategy should be adaptable depending on funding outcomes. Key components include:

- **Regular Updates**

Information should be provided to the community and stakeholders at key milestones, particularly after any funding decisions. A combination of digital platforms including Council website, social media, emails e-newsletters and traditional communication methods including news releases will be used.

- **Clear Timeline Communication**

Emphasise transparency with clear timelines for when decisions are expected and when updates will be shared. This will be Government announcement dependent.

- **Flexible Messaging:**

Tailor communications based on the three funding scenarios: no funding, partial funding, or full funding. Ensure that the audiences understand how each scenario will impact project delivery and their involvement.

KEY MESSAGES FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND THE COMMUNITY

8. It is essential to provide clear, consistent communication to maintain community trust and stakeholder confidence. Key messages will depend on the funding situation. We also need to align our messages with those sent out by Government to ensure consistency.

9. If Full Funding is Granted:

- **Timing of Communication:**

Immediately after funding is confirmed, announce the resumption of the Nelson Long Term Town Plan.

- **Key Messages:**

- We are pleased to announce that full funding has been secured, and the Nelson Long Term Town Plan will proceed as scheduled.
- Thank you to the community for your ongoing engagement. We look forward to working together to implement the ideas you've shared with us.

- Expect updates on key milestones and how you can continue to shape the future of Nelson.

10. If Partial Funding is Granted:

- **Timing of Communication:**

Once the extent of funding is clarified, communicate within 5 working days.

- **Key Messages:**

- We have received partial funding for the Nelson Long Term Town Plan and will prioritise the most critical projects.
- Your input remains essential, and we will work together to achieve the best outcomes with the resources available.
- Further updates will follow as we confirm which aspects of the plan can proceed.

11. If No Funding is Granted:

- **Timing of Communication:**

Communicate immediately after confirmation that no funding is available.

- **Key Messages:**

- Unfortunately, we have not received the necessary funding to continue the Nelson Long Term Town Plan at this time.
- We remain committed to improving Nelson's future and will continue seeking new opportunities for funding.
- Your contributions have not been in vain, and we will keep you informed of any further developments.
- Reiterate work which is being done in Nelson through Nelson Town Deal to improve the area.

PROGRESSION SUSPENDED

12. Major Capital Projects

Projects that may require significant financial investment, such as infrastructure development will need to wait for funding confirmation.

13. Consultant Engagement

Engagement of external consultants for detailed technical work should be paused until funds are confirmed.

NEXT STEPS

14. **Community Engagement**

Continue to engage with the community and key stakeholders on any updates as and when appropriate.

15. **Partnership Building**

Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders and funding bodies to enhance future alternative funding opportunities.

16. **Preliminary Planning**

Continue administrative preparations such as feasibility studies and preliminary designs for projects that can be launched when funding is confirmed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Review and approve the proposed communication strategy, adapting it to the potential funding scenarios.

18. Authorise the continued administration and community engagement work that can proceed without additional funding.

19. Postpone progress on any major capital projects and on any further engagement with external consultants on detailed technical works.

20. Provide direction on the allocation of any remaining unspent budget and review contingency plans for securing new funding sources.

21. Schedule a follow-up meeting once the funding situation has been clarified, to reassess resource availability and project timelines.

IMPLICATIONS

22. **Policy:** None arising directly from this report.

23. **Financial:** PBC will be the accountable body for the fund and an overview will be provided within the PID when appropriate. The procurement of consultants will be financed by the fund made available to support the investment plan development.

24. **Legal:** Subsidy Control regulations will need to be adhered to as part of the Long Term Plan for Towns.

25. **Risk Management:** The Programme Risk Register forms part of the Programme Initiation Document has been updated to take account of the suspension of the funding and matters arising in this report.

26. **Health and Safety:** None arising directly from this report.

27. **Sustainability:** The Long Term Plan provides an opportunity to consider sustainability within any investments selected.
28. **Community Safety:** The Long Term Plan provides an opportunity to consider the improvement of community safety within.
29. **Equality and Diversity:** None arising directly from this report.